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THE

# TRUTH ABOUT CANADA

WITH

## SOME EXCITING EXPERIENCES IN ALBERTA

BY

MORRIS W. THOMAS,

Penyrradd (late of Great Vaynor),

CLYNDERWEN.

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HAVERFORDWEST

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## **INTRODUCTION.**

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In compiling and publishing the following pages my aim has been (while giving a brief account of some of my experiences) to enlighten some of the residents of this country who are interested in Canada, as to some of the actual conditions existing there at the present moment. While there may be a few who are well acquainted with the conditions of life out there, the great majority are ignorant on this point. I can say from experience that it is advisable for those who intend emigrating to gain as much reliable information as possible regarding the land of their adoption before leaving this country. The Immigration Department of Canada issues, freely, several pamphlets and booklets describing the country, its resources, opportunities, possibilities, etc., which are in the main true; But there is too little mentioned in them about the drawbacks and the obstacles which the intended settler is likely to meet with. One side of the question only is given, and that the rosy one. I think it would have been better to give both sides of the question; there would then be less dissatisfaction amongst those who find things turning out a little different to what they expected. Many go out entirely on "Spec," knowing hardly anything about the country and caring less. It is those who are well informed who have the best chances of success. The best informed ones are liable to make a few mistakes, but not so liable to failure as those who are unacquainted with any of the conditions there existent. An excellent way of gaining useful "Inside" information about the country is to subscribe for one or more of the weekly newspapers published in the West, such as the "Free Press," "Telegram," "Farmers' Advocate," or the Nor-West Farmer," all of Winnipeg, Manitoba. They are very cheap, and are all excellent papers in their line. The publishers will forward sample copies free. There is no need to exaggerate anything pertaining to Western Canada, the truth is good enough. If the perusal of this little book will be a source of real benefit to some prospective emigrant, my efforts will not have been in vain. The reader will find herein many little facts not obtainable elsewhere. Throughout the book there will be found several Canadian and American terms not in use in this country, a few of which are distinguished by inverted commas.

**MORRIS W THOMAS.**

# THE TRUTH ABOUT CANADA

WITH

## SOME EXCITING EXPERIENCES IN ALBERTA.

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Ever since leaving school I had a very strong inclination to emigrate to one of the British Colonies, but it was not until about five years ago that I could muster up enough courage to make a start. Canada had always appealed to me more strongly than any of the other Colonies, owing to the richness of its soil, and the certainty with which success came to the majority of those who made an effort to attain it.

### THE VOYAGE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

I sailed from Liverpool on May 25th, 1905, on board the a.s. Victorian (12,000 tons), of the Allan Line; having booked my passage direct to Winnipeg, the capital of Western Canada. It was about 10 o'clock in the morning when we started from the landing stage at Liverpool. A large crowd of people had collected on the quay to wish good-bye to their friends and relatives who were departing for foreign parts. Several of those on shore I noticed were weeping, but whether they wept because they thought they would never see their friends again, or because they themselves were left behind, it was hard to say. The "Union Jack" was hoisted to the mast, and the passengers were crowded up on deck as the steamer gave a warning toot that she was about to make a start. There was much waving of handkerchiefs, hats, and parasols. One lady on shore even waved a perambulator, while her mother-in-law held the baby. It was to remind her young husband—who was emigrating to Canada, and going out alone to prepare a home for his wife and family—not to forget those who were left behind him. It was a little incident that would doubtless not fade from his memory for many a long day.

Our backs were soon turned on old England's shores, with our faces towards the west. The "wild and woolly" west, as some people wish to call it, but I did not find it either wild or woolly. As we glided down the river Mersey towards the Irish Sea, the land on each side was almost obscured from view owing to the thick haze prevailing. We were attracted by the large number of ships and boats of all sizes and forms that crowded the river. Each big boat sporting the flag of its nationality as we passed.

The passage across the Atlantic took us ten days. No bad storms were encountered. We had a very pleasant time, for there is always plenty of company on board ship, and acquaintances can soon be made. The passengers numbered over a thousand, most of them being emigrants bound for Western Canada.

Very good treatment is given on board all the big liners these days. The food is excellent. The only trouble with it is, that one is liable to overeat oneself, thereby causing stomach troubles, which most people allot to sea-sickness. I had a touch of real sea-sickness myself. It was not very pleasant at the time, but I think it eventually did me more good than harm. The following menu card will give an idea of what we had the choice of at our meals. No two meals were exactly alike:—

Second Cabin.—Tea (Queenstown): Fried Fresh Fish, Lobster Cutlets, Pigeons en Compote, Grilled Beef Steak and Onions, Mashed Potatoes. Cold: Soused Salmon, Cucumber, Roast Beef, Boiled Ham, Lettuce, Tomatoes, Beetroot, Pickles, German Salad. Prunes and Rice, Sultana Buns, Marmalade, Preserves. Tea and Coffee.

After partaking of all those luxuries, one would not feel like taking a very long walk. We had nothing much to do on the voyage out except eating, sleeping, and keeping ourselves out of mischief. As there was a good piano on board for the use of passengers, we had plenty of singing and playing. A very successful concert was held one evening. All sorts of games were indulged in, such as deck quoits, curling, ball playing, etc.

I noticed particularly that amongst the passengers were but a very few farmers, or persons that had had experience on the farm. Most of them were shop assistants, city clerks, and the like. Yet most of them seemed to be going out to farm in Western Canada.

On nearing the coast of Newfoundland we experienced nearly two days of foggy weather, when the vessel had to travel half speed owing to the danger of colliding with some other big boat, or perhaps an iceberg, which are very dangerous, especially at night time, because it is then very difficult to see them at a distance. As icebergs carry no lights like the ships, the greatest caution is required in navigating this part of the ocean on a foggy night. That was partly the reason why we were so long on the water, for the trip should have been made in seven or eight days. We were out of sight of land for nearly eight days.

#### SIGHTING LAND.

It was on the evening of the eighth day after leaving Liverpool that land was sighted. It proved to be the eastern coast of Newfoundland. It was a rough, rocky, wooded and uninviting kind of land, quite different from the nice green fields and pretty little towns and villages left behind in old England. We were not sorry when told that we were not to be landed there. Skirting the south coast of Newfoundland, then entering the mouth of the big river St. Lawrence, we came in sight of the mainland of Canada, which made us all feel jolly. We were all elated at the prospects of landing in the country of which we had heard so much and seen so little. Words cannot properly describe the impression that the first glimpse of a part of the continent of North America gave to all emigrants on board. It took some time to realize that we were actually gazing on a part of the New World. Talk was then at a discount with most of the passengers. They all seemed enraptured, busy turning over in their minds, and drinking in with their eyes the passing panoramic views of low mountain ranges covered with a dense forest right down to the water's edge, and little fishing villages nestling "neath leafy trees and shady nooks, 'midst woods and dells and babbling brooks," while our boat steamed gracefully up the river close to shore.

A stop was made at Rimouski to dump out the mail bags, of which there were several thousand. The mails are always the first things landed, as they are always given preference over passengers as far as despatching is concerned. Only a very few of the passengers were landed at Rimouski. After staying about an hour, the voyage was resumed. Steaming a few hundred miles up the mouth of the river St. Lawrence, another stop was made at Quebec, to discharge all the 3rd-class

passengers and those who were booked for that port. No one else was supposed to land, as the boat only stopped there for about half-an-hour before proceeding to its destination. Still, one giddy young couple could not resist the temptation to go on shore and do a little sight-seeing and shopping on their own account in a quiet way. When the warning whistle to start was given, it was most amusing to watch this pair skudding to the steamer with their bundles of oranges, bananas, etc., only to arrive in time to see the ship leaving the quay. It was truly pathetic to see the distracted look depicted on their faces when they realized that they were left behind, while their luggage and all their property went with the ship.

Another trip of about 200 miles up this fine river brought us to Montreal, where we landed safe and sound, glad to have our feet on terra firma once more. The first party to greet us on landing was the young couple who missed the boat at Quebec. They appeared rather shame-faced on meeting their acquaintances, and must have felt a little like truant school children. When they found that they had missed the boat they boarded a train, arriving at Montreal before the boat.

#### THE TRIP UP THE ST. LAWRENCE.

The scenery up the river was the grandest I had ever seen. This short trip is considered one of the prettiest in the world. We were amused to see—from the decks of the steamer—the people driving around in buggies, which are very light four-wheeled carriages, drawn by horses, mules, or even oxen and cows in some instances. A bull and an old horse may sometimes be seen hitched to the same buggy or waggon. The passengers were all thronged up on deck, for everyone was so glad to see the land again, after being so long on the water, that they would not miss for anything any sight that was worth seeing.

Starting from Quebec up the river one of the first things that is brought to your notice are the steep high cliffs on both sides of the river. They are 200ft. high in places, and almost perpendicular. It was up one of these banks that the British soldiers under General Wolfe had to climb hand over hand one dark night about 150 years ago, when they surprised the French army the next morning on the plains of Abraham, winning the famous battle of Quebec, thereby regaining and

afterwards maintaining the British supremacy in that part of the world. There are many people of French descent still living in the province of Quebec. The French language is largely spoken there at the present day, for it was at one time a French colony.

As we steamed up the river the banks gradually become lower, until, after a while, we were able to see the land on both sides from the top decks of the steamer. A short distance from Quebec the biggest bridge in the world is being built. When completed it will be about 300ft. high, and the centre span will be about 300 yards in length. Built of reinforced steel on the cantilever principle on concrete foundations, it was the most stupendous piece of man's handiwork I have ever seen. It was half completed five years ago, when the south half collapsed a short time after I saw it, owing, it is thought, to some miscalculations on the part of the designers. A large number of workmen were killed in the crash. That disaster cost the company that was building it nearly a million pounds. They have started rebuilding it now again, and expect it to be ready in about three years time. The new plans have been inspected and re-inspected by some of the best and most experienced engineers in the world.

The houses and villas skirting the banks of the St. Lawrence are all very prettily built and charmingly situated, all painted in various artistic colours, and surrounded by evergreens and several kinds of fruit trees, which were in full bloom when we passed.

As it was late in the evening when we reached Montreal we stayed in our bunks until morning. Before any one is allowed to land, a Canadian doctor boards the ship to examine the passengers. He takes his stand near some doorway on board, while all the passengers are obliged to pass through in single files, so strict are the regulations on this point, that no one is allowed to land who shows the least signs of contagious or infectious disease.

#### DISEMBARKING AND PASSING THE CUSTOMS.

The first thing we had to do on going ashore was to proceed to the Custom house, which was on the quay, to see about our luggage. Everything that comes in by boat is supposed to be minutely inspected by Government officials, to prevent dutiable articles to be smuggled in. As I had no dutiable goods, there was nothing to pay. The Custom house is a long shed-like building. One of the first things you

notice on entering are the big letters "stuck on" the walls, starting with A, B, C at one end, down to Z at the other end. As my name was Thomas I had to find the letter T. Opposite it I found my luggage, and there I waited until the Customs' inspector came round and ordered me to open my trunks. He just glanced over them, then passed on to the next passenger. The railway porter then came up and gave every one a card or check, with a number on it, for every trunk they had. We were then free to go and take the train. These cards had to be taken care of, for your luggage would not be delivered at the end of your journey unless these checks were produced. The railway company took full responsibility for all luggage after it was checked, thereby relieving the passengers of much of the constant care and worry usually experienced while travelling in this country.

#### TRAIN JOURNEY THROUGH ONTARIO.

We then went straight to the train, which was waiting to convey those of the passengers who were going further west. All trains in Canada are built and run on the American plan. They are quite different from the English trains, being composed of several long corridor carriages—called cars—with double doors at the ends, and steps leading up to the doors. It takes a longer time for the passengers to alight at the station or depot than it does when the doors are at the side. Each carriage has seating capacity for about fifty persons. There are first-class, tourist, colonist, dining and sleeping cars attached to nearly all the express trains. When travelling from place to place in Canada, all have to travel first-class, as second and third-class tickets are not sold to any except homeseekers or land seekers who travel a long way. The first-class rate is 3 cents. ( $1\frac{1}{4}$ d.) per mile. Excellent meals are obtainable on board the trains at about one dollar per meal. Those who wish to travel on the cheap usually buy a basket of sandwiches, a packet of tea, coffee, or cocoa, and a tin cup. Boiling water is usually obtainable free of charge on the trains, and at some of the stations. The train is always in charge of a conductor, who is generally polite and pleasant, ready at all times to give reasonable information to the passengers on inquiry. A couple of brakemen are also on board each train. It may be mentioned that they are not there to waste their time and education while on duty parleying with the passengers or emigrants, in response to out-and-out inquisitiveness on the latter's part.

Our train travelled for two days and two nights before reaching Winnipeg, a journey of about 1,500 miles. All, except the first 400 miles, was through the roughest piece of country imaginable, nothing but rocks, hills and woods all the way almost, the woods being destroyed to a large extent by forest fires. This stretch of country will never be any good for farming owing to its rough surface. Young trees are popping up again amongst the blackened stumps. There are immense tracts of valuable timber, composed of spruce, larch, tamarac and other kinds, lying here and there untouched by fires, which will be cut down some day, providing employment for thousands of lumber-jacks. Several large saw-mills were in sight of the railroad, where hundreds of men were employed at wages ranging from 4s. to 10s. per day, according to skill and position, with board free.

Deposits of silver were discovered a little distance north of the railway at Cobalt, about five years ago, which has proved to be one of the richest silver mining camps in the world. The silver is found in the solid rock, in veins of almost pure metal from 5in. to 12in. wide. Over £10,000,000 worth of silver has already been mined, while it is stated on good authority that the camp is yet only in its infancy, the mineralized district being very large. Cobalt is now a well-built, up-to-date town of about 6,000 population, and growing steadily and rapidly. It has the distinction of being the first "dry" mining camp in the world, no intoxicating liquors being allowed to be sold in the town, consequently it is a most orderly and well regulated place, quite a contrast to most mining towns in different parts of the world.

#### REACHING WESTERN CANADA.

As we kept going west the land gradually became more level, until, by the time Manitoba was reached, we had entered on a stretch of country that was almost perfectly level as far as the eye could reach, with very little wood, but land that was covered with good grass at one time. Before it was ploughed up it was called prairie. Most of it in the vicinity of Winnipeg and westwards for a considerable distance is now under cultivation.

On reaching Winnipeg, which is a fine, fast growing, and very cosmopolitan city of about 150,000 inhabitants, with fine buildings, and very wide streets.—The C.P.R. railway depot at this place is one of the finest buildings

of its kind in the world. First-class accommodation can be obtained at some of the best hotels, with every convenience, at one dollar per day and upwards—I called to see some of the Government land agents at the Immigration Hall, which is near the station, about selecting land, etc. I had previously written to several Dominion land agents located in the various parts of the west, requesting them to write to me giving "a detailed description of the open land in their respective localities," and to address the letters to me, c/o Immigration Hall, Winnipeg, to be left until called for. Sure enough, when I called at the Hall descriptive letters from half-a-dozen of these agents were waiting to be claimed by me.

#### CROSSING THE WESTERN PRAIRIES.

Having decided to go further west on the advice obtained, I took train again for another 1,000 mile journey across the prairies to Central Alberta, where a new railway was being built. Thinking there would be a good chance to select land along the survey of this new railway, I booked to Lacombe, a town on the Calgary and Edmonton Railway. While journeying across this seemingly endless expense of undulating prairie, I could not help being struck with the immensity of the country. One has to travel right across Canada in order to form a comprehensive idea as to its magnitude. Only a small portion of it could be seen from the train windows of course, and even only a very small percentage of that was under cultivation or occupied. The bulk of it was a treeless plain covered with grass and nothing else. There was no thorns, brambles, furze, or anything of that kind. It could be brought under cultivation with very little trouble or expense. As we kept going west the land became gradually more undulating, until, by the time Alberta was reached, it became quite "rolling" in places.

This is Western Canada proper; the land of opportunities, sunshine and prosperity. That part of the world which is foremost in the eyes of the public at the present time, as a field for emigration, because it offers better inducements and prospects than any other part. The American farmers are pouring in there at the rate of 20,000 per month this summer. They sell their farms in the United States at a big price, and with the proceeds buy a farm in Western Canada of equal fertility four times as large. That is part

of the reason why they are flocking in there in such a wholesale way. In general they are sociable, honest and enterprising class of people. Before becoming Canadian subjects they have to swear allegiance to the British crown. At first they do not relish that kind of thing, for they are all very patriotic and proud of their country and their flag (the world famous Stars and Stripes), but they soon change their minds, for they will sacrifice almost anything to the "Almighty dollar." All of them eventually become good Canadian or British subjects. Englishmen also emigrate there in larger numbers than ever. It is estimated that about 100,000 of them will go this year.

Canada is such a big country, that the same remarks do not apply to all sections of it as regards climate, soil and topographical conditions. Eastern Canada embraces the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and the maritime provinces, which are all very old settled districts, having been occupied for over 200 years in parts. At one time they were covered with timber, which had to be cut down, and the land cleared of stumps before it could be cultivated, making it very laborious for the settler who had to do the clearing. A large portion of it has been cleared for such a long time now, that one could never tell that at one time it was a dense forest. The soil and climate is so suitable for fruit growing, as not to be excelled. This is the country that supplies England with some of those beautiful red apples one often sees in shop windows. The winters here are usually cold and severe, the snowfall being very heavy, but the summers are very warm.

But when we speak of Western Canada, it is of a different part altogether. Strictly speaking, it should be called Central Canada, for it is bounded on the west by the Rocky Mountains and British Columbia, on the South by the United States of America, on the north by the Arctic Ocean and on the east by Hudson's Bay and Eastern Canada. It is a big and almost level plain nearly 1,000 miles long by about 800 miles wide, undoubtedly the biggest patch of good farming land on the globe. The southern portion is an open prairie country, almost clear of timber, while the northern portions are more or less covered with patches of poplars, willows and other kinds of timber. The deepest and richest soil is usually found in the districts that are slightly timbered. It has been proved that the soil

is good and suitable for agriculture right up to the Arctic circle. The time will soon come when it will all be occupied. The days are very long and warm up there in summer time, enabling the crops to ripen in a very short time, as compared with lands further south. In winter time the nights are long and cold, but it is always dry. Rain never falls in any part of Western Canada in the winter time, and the snowfall is not very heavy. It snows a good deal less in Western than it does in Eastern Canada.

#### THE C.P.R.

Thirty years ago this immense stretch of territory was quite vacant and empty, except for a few Red Indians and some hunters or trappers employed by that big fur trading concern, The Hudson Bay Company. It only started to get settled about that time, for then the Canadian Pacific Railway was built right across the Continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Before that time it was controlled by the Hudson Bay Company, which still retains a 5 per cent. interest in all the unoccupied lands, two square miles of land in every township being reserved for them by the Government.

The project of constructing this railway was for a long time considered a very venturesome proposition, owing to the fact that it had to be built through a thousand miles of rocky and unproductive land on one side, and 500 miles of mountains on the other side. It was considered by many that it would never pay the expenses to run it. It was through the efforts of such men as Lord Strathcona and James J. Hill, the great American railroad magnate, that it was at last completed. Immense engineering difficulties had to be contended with. One of the terms of the contract between the C.P.R. Co. and the Canadian Government was that 25,000,000 acres of the best land in Western Canada was to be ceded to the Company as soon as the railway was completed. This land was practically valueless at that time owing to the lack of means of transportation, but now it is worth as raw or unimproved land from £1 to £6 per acre, according to quality and location. The value is also increasing year by year as the country gets settled, for the intrinsic value of the land is considerably higher than the market value, the reason for this being the great abundance of unoccupied land coupled with the scarcity of population.

This big company sells the land to the settlers on very easy terms if necessary, as it does not farm any of it on its

own account. A settler may buy it by instalments if he chooses, just like buying a bicycle or piano, and no more trouble. There are no heavy stamp duties or fees to be paid, like there are in this country. He can have ten years to pay for it. By paying a small portion of the purchase price each year, he would soon be able to clear it by means of the produce of the land. If he prefers he can buy the land on the half-crop system, delivering half the crop to the company at the end of each year, until the land is paid for, retaining the other half to help meet the expenses. Those who desire to pay spot cash for the land may be allowed 9 per cent. discount. The prices range from £2 to £5 per acre for unimproved land, according to quality and location. The farther away from a railway station the land is situated, the cheaper the price. The C.P.R. Co. is a very honest and upright company to deal with. I am told on good authority that it has never been known to have a lawsuit with any of the settlers who have bought their land.

Several other railway companies have also received land subsidies in the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. It is to these provinces that most of the emigrants go at the present time, for it is here also that the free Government land is to be obtained. On payment of an extra fee of £2, any male person over 18 years of age, or widow having minor children of her own, dependent on her for support may have 160 acres of land free of charge subject to the following duties:—Residence on the land for six months in each year for three years, the erection of a habitable house thereon, and the cultivation of 30 acres of the homestead. At the end of three years and completion of duties, the homesteader will receive the patent or deed free of charge. If a person owns land in the vicinity to the extent of 80 acres or more, it is not absolutely necessary for him to live on the homestead; residence on the land he owns will comply with the regulations. I obtained one of these free farms, and any one who cares to go there can get one.

In certain districts of Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, 320 acres may be obtained, half of it free, the other half at the small price of 12s. 6d. per acre and an extra three years' residence. Terms:—One-third purchase money to be paid at the end of three years; the balance in five equal annual instalments with interest.

#### DESTINATION REACHED.

On arriving at Lacombe, the end of my railway journey,

One of the first men I met was a Mr. Brown, from Whitland. After spending a short but pleasant time in his company, I called at the Dominion Land Office. There is one in nearly every town in Western Canada. A Mr. Vickerson was agent there at that time. I found him a very courteous gentleman, only too willing to give any information required concerning the land in his district that was open for selection. It was through his letter of information that I selected this part to settle in in preference to others. I found everything to be fairly true to description. He gave me some paper plots or plans of a few townships which he recommended as being suitable for wheat farming, for that was the occupation I had decided upon following from the start.

"In Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta the land is surveyed into square blocks six miles each way; such a block being called a township. Each township contains 36 sections. A section contains 640 acres and forms one square mile, each quarter section contains 160 acres. Sections Nos. 11 and 29 are reserved by the Government for school purposes." The Hudson's Bay Company's land for sale are Section Nos. 8 and 26 in each township. There is a road allowance, 22 yards wide, running north and south every mile apart, and a road running east and west every alternate mile. The roads are generally perfectly straight for hundreds of miles.

#### LAND-SEEKING EXPEDITION.

After getting plans of the district I wanted, I made arrangements with a countryman I met, from near Cardiff, to go out and spy the land. He had only just got married and was on his honeymoon. Having already taken up a free homestead, he was preparing to move out to his land with his young wife, stock and goods when I met him. So I had good company in my search for suitable land, which was out at a distance of 70 miles from town. We had to camp out on the roadside some nights in the tent, but as it was summer time that was considered a minor detail. There were "Stopping Houses" on the roadside, situated about 15 miles or so apart, where comfortable accommodation would be provided for the men and their teams travelling that way. They were usually kept by the farmers, who made no small amount in this way, as a side-line. The charges would usually be about 1s. per meal, 1s. for bed, and 1s. for stabling the team. If the horses required oats 1s. extra would be charged. It was a great comfort and convenience for people travelling in wet

weather or in winter time, to be able to reach a "stopping house," especially for women or children.

#### ROUGHING IT.

There were five of us in the party, with three waggons and teams, also a pony; I rode the pony. He was a wild little cayuse, only half broken in. I had all I could do to keep my seat and steer him straight. Owing to the bad state of the roads in places, and the waggons being heavily loaded, we got stuck one evening in a soft place. It was a beautiful night, but the ground was so wet after a recent thunder shower that we did not bother to pitch the tent, so we had to shift the best way we could, as there was no stopping house within five miles. One old fellow slept on top of a load of furniture—he caught a bad cold thereby. Two others stood up talking all night, these were very stiff next morning, so they said; while I managed to sleep on the waggon pole that night, the narrowest bedstead that it has ever been a man's lot to sleep upon, I should think, as it was only four inches wide. Had not those two fellows talked so loudly and so much I would have slept well, too. Anyhow, I felt better the next morning than any of the rest, and I can say from experience that many worst things could happen to a man than sleeping on a waggon pole for one night, with the bolster of the waggon for a pillow and the starry sky for a blanket.

This journey of 70 miles took us five days to cover owing to the bad state of the roads at the time. As a rule the roads are in splendid condition, but in the month of June the weather is damper than usual, consequently the trails are badly cut up in some low-lying places where water is liable to stand after rain. The roads are not covered with stones like as we have them in this country). Owing to the dryness of the climate stones are not needed. When properly graded earthen roads are smooth and as good as any. There is never any wear and tear on the roads of Western Canada in winter time because the ground is frozen up all the time, and generally covered lightly with snow. Wheeled vehicles are seldom used in winter, sleighs and cutters being more suitable. The roads leading out to a new district are called trails, which are very crooked as a rule, just like the roads in this country. They wind back and fore in a zig-zag fashion, and appear at a distance just like huge snakes. If there happens to be a hill in the way, it seems bound of necessity to head for that hill. I have often wondered why the roads were so crooked

in this country, but the reason is not far to seek, for, having seen how the trails start in the west, it is evident that our roads must have started in just the same way, by someone in the long time ago—before there were any hedges built—striking off across country in an aimless way in the direction of the place he wished to reach, driving a cart maybe. Then the next one that happens to come along that way follows in the same tracks, with the result that in time it became a beaten track and eventually a road. But in Canada the Government has taken the matter in hand. It does not allow these crooked trails to exist for ever, for as soon as the land becomes settled up the fences are often built right across the trails, compelling those that travel that way to keep to the straight and wide road allowances that are already surveyed. There are marks made in the ground every half mile, showing the location of the roads, sections and townships. Four square holes are dug in the ground 2ft. apart, about 2ft. square and 2ft. deep, with a slight iron post in the centre, having the numbers of the section, township and range marked on it. There is also a flag-staff, so that you can see it when you go on a land-hunting trip. The idea of the four holes is to prevent mischievous persons from removing the marks. The iron post or flag-staff may be easily removed, but the holes cannot so easily be carried away. Sometimes it is rather difficult for a newcomer to know exactly where he is in a new country owing to the flagstaff falling down or being burnt down by a prairie fire, and by a new country I mean a district that has not already been settled up. So it is always best to go along with someone else who knows the country, for it does take a little time and experience to get acquainted with the ins and outs of the game.

When our caravan of three waggons and pony reached its destination, we did the same as the Israelites of old, pitched our camp and took a rest, enjoying the scenery, not because of its beauty, for it was rather monotonous, but because of its strangeness or singularity when compared with the land 'way back in old England. It was the sight of an endless expanse of prairie, nearly level and covered with a good quality grass—called buffalo grass—that greeted us. Our camp was pitched alongside one of those numerous creeks or deep water courses by which the whole country is interspersed. These creeks get filled up with water in spring, after the winter snows have thawed out, and sometimes in June, when

the rainy time of the season is on, but on towards the end of summer they are always "dried-out."

My friend from Cardiff had selected a good piece of land for his homestead, whereon to make his home for the next three years at least. His young wife was delighted with the situation, and did not mind roughing it a bit at the start, although she had been brought up in a town and had never lived on a farm.

#### SPYING OUT THE LAND.

After getting a good night's rest, I started out with one of the young men to spy out some land for myself. We went over half-a-dozen plots that were marked vacant on the paper plots we had, and made our selection the south-east quarter of Section Twelve in Township Thirty-eight and Range Seventeen, west of the fourth meridian (S.E. 1/4—12—38 17-W-4) Then started on the return journey as soon as possible in order to "file" on the homestead before anyone else had the chance to, for there are always several parties hunting up land in the same districts, and it often behoves one to be on the qui-vive in order to obtain the one selected. Those that are first on the spot at the Dominion Land Office in town get their choice of location.

The return journey was made in two days with two empty waggons. The young married couple was left behind on the homestead honeymooning and planning. A happier and more contented pair of turtle doves I never saw.

#### FILING ON A HOMESTEAD AND PURCHASING OUTFIT.

It took me but a short time after reaching town to file on my homestead at the Dominion Land Office for which I had to pay £2. That was all the expense attached to it. Having also bought a tract of land in the same locality as the homestead from the C.P.R. Company, at £1 5s. per acre, on the instalment plan, the next thing to be done was to purchase some horses, a waggon, tent, some farm implements, and a stock of provisions, enough to make a start on. Every little town has its indispensable lot of storekeepers who usually keep a large store of goods of all descriptions on hand to suit the requirements of the settlers. Almost everything is obtainable there that is obtainable here, at very reasonable prices. Fresh meat and butter were a good deal cheaper, while farm implements and clothing were a little dearer, were high. Real good heavy ones were hard to procure at any

price. There were one or more wholesale horse dealers in most towns, who brought the horses in in large "bunches" direct from the big horse ranches in South Alberta and Montana. Several large livery barns were built in every town, with suitable yards attached, where the horses were locked up and broken in. It was no trouble to buy plenty at a fixed price. Very little bartering is done in Canada while buying or selling. The class of horses brought in was a rough-looking lot as a rule, rather slight in the bone and of no particular breed, but very tough and wiry. It usually required considerable skill and nerve to handle them, for they were seldom well broken in, being wild by nature but not often vicious. They are generally sold in pairs, for the waggons are always drawn by teams two abreast; two-wheeled carts are never used. The waggons have no shafts, but have a pole fixed instead. The horses always walk in the same tracks as the wheels.

The horse dealers are always very anxious to have a chance to sell a saddle horse to a newcomer from England. They enjoy nothing better than to see him mount on one of their horses which is sold on trial, "guaranteed" to be quiet and well broken. One or more thorough "buck-jumpers" are sometimes kept in stock solely for the purpose. Usually a quiet, sly-looking kind of animal appearing quite harmless while being led around the yard, but no sooner is a man in the saddle—especially if he happens to be a "green" Englishman, and they seemed to know by instinct whether he is or not—than up in two-doubles you would find him in an instant, with his tail between his hind legs and his head between the fore ones. Then look out for "something doing." He starts plunging with a vengeance, buck-jumping like a deer with all four feet off the ground the same time, not quitting his task until the "green one" is tossed in the air, and after completing a somersault or two is landed on the prairie sod that feels a little "different" to a feather-bed. A little stiffness or soreness usually follows as a consequence, seldom anything worse. A lesson of this kind is apt to dispel any illusion one might have as to the rosy and easy life of the frontier. It constitutes a part of the education of many prospective pioneers. The life of the pioneer is no joke, but it has a certain charm about it that seems to fascinate most of those who try it. It has helped many a man to become more self-reliant, energetic and industrious. The vicissitudes

of the pioneer are many, while disappointments are not rare.

I soon found that there was a certain prejudice against Englishmen all over the West. It is unfounded in most cases. Part of the reason is the large number of ne'er-do-wells that emigrate from the large cities of England to the Canadian farms direct, expecting to receive at the start wages as good as what are earned by experienced men. The term "Green Englishmen" is soon applied to them. It is a phrase one will often hear expressed while travelling over the country.

#### STARTING OUT FOR LOCATION FULLY EQUIPPED.

After staying in town a couple of days, getting supplies, etc., I started out again for my land, with a complete outfit, ready to start operations. The land agent in town introduced me to two young fellows from London—~~natives~~ of North Wales—who were just starting out for the same locality as myself. So I was in luck's way again; was thrown into good jolly company from the start. For as they had taken up a homestead each, a mile or so from mine, I knew I would not be short of good neighbours anyhow.

As the trails happened to be in better condition this time than on the last trip, we were able to make it in three and a half days, and we would have done it in half a day less had it not been for the fact that our horses got lost one night while we were soundly snoring in the tent. When we awoke the next morning there was not the sight of a horse to be seen, and we were getting anxious, but thought they could not be very far away, as they were all hobbled on their fore-legs with leather straps. Still it is surprising how fast a old horse can travel when the mood strikes him, even when hobbled. We had one saddle-horse tied to a long picket rope fast to a peg in the ground, which was fortunate in this case. After saddling him and galloping around the country for a couple of hours, we found them all quietly taking a nap in a gully, or slight depression in the ground, not more than half a mile from where we camped.

After finding our horses, and while we were about to resume our journey, it commenced raining heavily. So we decided to remain in the tent until it cleared a little; but instead of clearing it came on to such a downpour of rain as I have never seen before or since. it required more than a little wet to dampen our spirits. Inside that little tent, with the rain pouring down in sheets

outside, we were one of the merriest parties on earth. With the aid of a little camp stove inside and plenty of dry firewood which we were lucky enough to procure before it commenced raining, we were able to enjoy ourselves in comfort, spinning yarns, etc. My companions whiled away the hours by indulging in the fragrant weed. "My Lady Nicotine" seemed to have an overpowering charm over them. The amount of tobacco that was converted into smoke inside that tent that day was surprising. Canadians are not humbugged with new Budget taxes on tobacco like we are in this country. The pure stuff is obtainable in 1lb. packages at from 1s. to 1s. 3d. per lb.

#### SETTLING DOWN.

When we arrived at our destination one of the first things to be done was to select a suitable spot somewhere near the road allowance as a site for building. Once again our tents were pitched, this time on our own land (each on his own homestead of course), whereon we intended to remain for three years at least. I pitched my tent with the door—or opening that served for a door—pointing towards the north, for as the weather was rather hot we found it better, through experience, to have the door on the shaded side of the tent.

I slept soundly the first night, dreaming of home and home comforts. The first sight that greeted me next morning when I got up was a pack of young wolves sitting on their haunches and "making eyes" at me at a distance of about 150 yards. I took care to have my gun ready loaded with a good supply of ammunition handy in case of emergency, for if the worst came to the worst I was fully prepared to sell my life as dearly as possible. Firing a shot at random they soon disappeared over the horizon, casting a sly look behind as they galloped away.

My second night's slumber was not so peaceful as I had a most peculiar dream. Imagining that I was returning home on foot, and alone one moonlight night through a lonely road that skirted a large wood, I fancied that I heard a noise as of some animal creeping through the wood, thereby breaking a few tender twigs. Bringing myself to a standstill on my journey and listening attentively, I could hear nothing except my own heart thumping, in my throat seemingly, the rustle of the leaves on the tree-tops as they were gently swayed by the wind, and the distant howls of wolves which I judged must be at least a mile away. So,

thinking it must have only been my imagination after all, that I had heard anything—for one's imagination will get strung sometimes, especially while out on a lonely road at night—I started whistling a familiar tune and quickened my pace, when, all of a sudden, as a shadow seemed to flutter across my path, a monster of a wolf jumped out of the gloom, and made straight for my throat with his mouth wide open. I had no weapon of any kind, not even a stick, to defend myself with. Instinctively I clenched my natural protectors and aimed a blow at him, into which I put all my strength. In doing so my right arm was thrust right down his throat up to my arm-pits. While withdrawing it I caught hold of his tail and turned him completely inside out. Leaving him to measure his length on the prairie, I scampered home in time to hear the clock strike 5 a.m. I was surprised, on waking, to find myself comfortably tucked up in bed.

I found out after a few days that these prairie wolves were very harmless. If they see a man approaching they turn tail at once, and never trouble anybody except to steal some of the poultry once in a while, when there would be no one at home. At night-time they howl with the most hideous howl imaginable. We get accustomed to them after a while. I have often been lulled to sleep at night to the music of their din, always accompanied by the most tremendous croaking of frogs. They are getting scarcer year by year as the land gets settled up, and will in time be as scarce as they are here.

A few badgers could be seen occasionally, the land was cut up in many places with their holes. A badger will never enter its hole head foremost like every other animal. When chased they can always be seen to turn round just before entering the hole in order to get in backwards. It is very amusing to watch them doing it. The best soil was always to be found where the most badger holes were.

I once saw a couple of skunks—odious animals which are rather uncommon. In general appearance the skunk resembles a pole-cat but it is rather larger and much thicker in proportion. Conscious of its power, it roams by day about the open prairie, and fears neither dog nor man. If a dog is urged to the attack, its courage is instantly checked by a few drops of fetid oil, which brings on violent sickness and running at the nose. Whatever is once polluted by this stuff, is for ever useless. Sometimes the strong smell can be perceived at a great

distance. More than once, while riding on the shores of a lake a mile in width, have I perceived the odour, which was carried by the wind from the opposite shore. Certain it is that every animal most willingly makes room for the skunk.

#### BREAKING UP THE PRAIRIE.

It was on the 1st of July that I arrived on the land, five weeks from the time I started from home. It was already beginning to get too dry for breaking up the land. The settlers want to plough up the prairie as quickly as possible, in order to have as much land as possible under cultivation while the season lasts. As a rule, the breaking season only lasts for two or three months, from the time the spring opens up in April till about the middle of July. This is the only time of the year in which rain falls in any quantity. After July the land gets so dry and hard, that it is very difficult to break it up. If it should be broken up when very dry, the sods will not rot, the following crop being consequently very slight. The best method of breaking is to plough as shallow as possible, say about two inches deep, in May or June, cutting furrows from twelve inches to sixteen inches wide, according to the size of the plough and the number of horses used. At least three horses are required for breaking, four are better, driven four abreast usually. Then in August or end of July, the same land should be back-set, that is, it should be ploughed again, about two inches deeper than the first time. After being harrowed a few times, it is then ready for sowing the following spring without further cultivation.

Another method of breaking, and that which is adopted by the largest number, is that called deep-breaking. The sod is turned over to a depth of four or five inches at one operation. More horse-power is required for this kind of breaking owing to the depth ploughed and the toughness of the sod. This style of breaking seldom gives such good results as the firstnamed method.

There is a tendency among the farmers of Alberta and the West generally to have a large number of acres under cultivation, overlooking the fact that one acre properly cultivated will yield more profit than two acres badly cultivated in that climate. In their anxiety to increase the size of their farms, they are frequently over-reaching themselves. The men that hold only as many acres as they can conveniently and properly handle are the ones that usually make a success of it.

It is not advisable to sow anything on the land the same year as it is broken. If it is left to rot until the following spring an excellent crop can always be assured. The hard frosts of winter help to pulverise the soil, making the land very easy to dress. The only crop that can be sown with any chance of success on the freshly turned sod, the same year as it is broken, is linseed or flax. But it is generally best not to have anything to do with flax, as it is very difficult, in fact almost impossible to buy flax seed that is free from noxious weeds.

I was only able to get thirteen acres broken the first season, as it was late when I arrived on the land. Everyone contemplating taking up land in Western Canada should make it a point to arrive on the spot early in April in order to make the most of their time, as they would then have the full season ahead of them, enabling them if they wished to, to have a large acreage of land broken up the first year. Most of the people out there are wheat farmers, depending entirely on the profits derived from the wheat. In order to achieve success they must know how to "hustle" and get a "move on" while the season lasts. The seasons being short, twelve months' work has often to be crowded into six or eight months.

#### WELL-DIGGING OPERATIONS.

As the season advanced water also got scarcer. There was no spring or running water on my farm. I dug a well 10ft. deep in a convenient spot, in order to have a supply of water. I got plenty of it at that depth, but the water was not fit for human use. It had an alkalic taste, and had the same effect on a person as Epsom salts. Another well was dug of the same depth, which proved to contain the same quality water. So Well No. 3 had to be dug, where excellent water was found at a depth of 24ft. Winter time is considered the best time for well-digging, for at that time the sides are not so liable to cave in, owing to the hard night frosts freezing up the sides gradually as the well is sunk. The ground is frozen up at that time to a depth of 2ft. more or less according to how far the season is advanced—beneath the frost it is generally moist. As the sub-soil is generally clayey it is not a very difficult matter to have a well dug. There are men to be found in every district always willing to take on a well-digging job at from 8s. 6d. per day upwards, or 4s. per foot in depth on contract job. Square wells are usually

dug, about 3ft. 6in. wide, which are cribbed up with boards to prevent the sides falling in. Sometimes a well-boring machine might be obtainable, which is handled by two men and worked by horse-power. It is capable of boring a 2ft. hole to a depth of 40ft. If water is not struck the charges are half-price.

In some localities water cannot be obtained in sufficient quantities in dry seasons without going down very deep. Sometimes a depth of 300ft. or over has to be reached before a straw flow of water is struck. A special well-drilling outfit has to be employed for this purpose, which drills a 6in. hole at the rate of 4s. per foot; it is driven by steam or gasoline power.

Very seldom do the settlers have to go to such expense to find water, for in most districts shallow wells prevail, which are cheaply dug. All over the country there is a great demand for those who have the power of "divining" for water with the hazel or willow "wand." I was for a long time very sceptical of this kind of thing. It savoured too much of superstition to suit my liking, for I certainly was not gifted with the power. But from observation and experience I could not fail to arrive at the conclusion that there is more in it than "meets the eye." A very slight V shaped branch or crotch of willow, of the previous year's growth, is cut and stripped of its leaves. This is held in both hands in a twisted, peculiar position, so that the butt end—which endeavoured to be kept on a level—will bob up and down with the least perceptible effort, while the "diviner" strides back and fore over the spot where the well is desired. If there happens to be a vein of water underneath, the butt end of the twig will bend towards the earth. The vein can be located, and followed for quite a distance. But there is no certainty attached to this method of finding water.

#### HAYMAKING.

After fencing in a little pasture for the horses with barbed wire—there being no fences or hedges at first—I was ready about the first week in August to start haymaking. All over the prairie there was plenty of natural hay to be found, free for the cutting. The thickest hay was generally found in the sloughs, which were usually "dried" out by this time. Scattered here and there all over the country there were scores of shallow ponds, or sloughs, as they are called. This slough grass was about 2ft. or 3ft. high as a rule, and always

very thick. I have cut some that was over seven feet high. It made a rough looking kind of hay, but the stock usually prefer it to the prairie or upland hay. It was rather relaxing in its effects, therefore not very suitable for horses that worked very hard, but more suitable for idle horses or young stock.

We could always depend on having excellent weather for haymaking, for rain seldom falls at that time of the year. The hay cured so quickly that it could often be hauled to the stack the day following the day it was mown. It is amusing at first to see the Canadian method of "haying." Each settler puts up his hay by himself generally, unless he owns a large farm. A mower, horse-rake and a waggon are all the implements needed. Haymakers are never used. The box of the waggon is taken off the frame for hauling hay, and a sort of rack, about 16 feet long by 8 feet wide, and 4 feet deep, made of slight poles or boards, just like a big basket, is put in its place. This holds about a ton of hay. The hay is pitched up with a long-pronged, four-tined fork, and it will load itself; it cannot fall off. There is no need of a man to load it. We were not particular about raking it up clean, for there was any amount of hay to be had, going to waste for want of somebody to cut it. The hay was thrown on a heap on the ground, in the shape of a long, low stack. We did not trouble to make a bed or grounding to it, as the ground was perfectly dry by this time. All the hay, including the top and bottom layers, would keep in good condition until the following spring without being thatched.

The big cattle farmers (or ranchers, as they are called out there) have a totally different system of haymaking, as they have to put up a very large quantity of hay during the season, and have to employ several extra hands for the purpose. The wages vary from 4s. to 6s. per day with board. They use a home-made wooden implement called a buck-rake for hauling in the hay, which is handled by two men and two teams. It is built from 10 feet to 12 feet wide, drags on the ground and sweeps in the hay, a good load at a time, right on to the hay-stack. Two straight poles, which are placed to lean on the stack, enable the buck-rake to climb up to the top of the stack, after which the teams turn right round and pull it down backwards. Six tons per day per working man is considered an average day's work, that is counting the men who are on the mowers and rake as well. All the men

ride on seats, so there is not much real hard work attached to it. Work starts each morning at 7 o'clock, and quits at 6 p.m.

### BUILDING A SOD STABLE.

After hay-making was over with me, the next thing to be done was the erection of some kind of a shelter for the horses; so I ploughed up a small piece of ground in furrows 14 ins. wide and 4 ins. deep, cut them up with a spade into 2ft. lengths, and built a stable of sods, built just like a brick wall, only of a different colour. (The prairie sod was tough, being full of grass roots; it would stand a lot of handling). It was a very warm building; very cheap if not elegant. The only expense attached to it was for a door and a few nails. Most of the settlers had sod out-buildings to start with. They knew how to make a penny go a long way. It has been said that "when you go to Rome, you must do as the Romans do." The same rule may be applied with advantage to Canada. One cannot go far wrong by imitating the neighbours who are most successful.

I have seen many dwelling houses built of sods completely, walls and roof. It makes a very comfortable house after being well floored with boards, with good large windows and doors fitted, and the walls being done up with strong building paper on the inside; it is then very warm in winter and cool in summer. If taken care of, a sod building would last for 20 years or more.

Conventionality is at a discount out in the West. The people care very little about the remarks their neighbours may make about them. Everyone seems to mind his own business, rarely interfering with others. There are many cultured and refined families starting life in a sod shack on the western prairies. A few good crops of wheat soon bring in sufficient to erect elegant dwellings that gradually alter the aspect of the landscape.

### CONSTRUCTING A FRAME "SHACK."

After completing the stable, I started building myself a house. Most settlers build their house first thing, but I enjoyed the life so well in the tent that I did not hurry at all about my house. For I quite agree with Mark Twain when he said—"Camping out has a charm in itself, which, once tasted, makes a man yearn to taste again." But a few frosty nights on towards the end of September made me wish for a little more warmth and comfort; so I bought some "lumber," or building material, from the storekeeper, who lived about

3½ miles distant, and rigged up a small house in a very short time.

Nearly all dwelling houses are made of wood in Western Canada, because they can be built cheaper and quicker with wood than with stone; while stone and brick are hard to procure at present in many places. The climate is so dry out there that a wooden house (or a frame house, as it is called) will last as long almost as a stone building will last in this country, if it is properly taken care of. They are built in two thicknesses, being lathed and plastered on the inside, which causes them to be very warm and comfortable. Built in various designs and usually painted in different colours, they look very picturesque and artistic.

#### PRAIRIE FIRES.

About the first week in October a good deal of smoke seemed to be hanging around, which we knew to be caused by prairie fires in the distance, the reflection of the light of which was clearly to be seen in the sky at night time. The grass at this time of the year is very dry, and withered into a yellow colour, having been cured or withered by the continuous rays of the sun. It would burn like a tinder-box. People have to be careful not to throw any lighted matches on the ground, for the grass would blaze up in one instant and was very hard to extinguish. A prairie fire is very dangerous on a windy day, for it then travels very fast before the wind, burning up everything combustible in its course.

Last year, there was a very big prairie fire that came within half a mile of my place. It had been burning for three days, clearing up a tract of country 50 miles long by 20 miles wide. Several horses and cattle were destroyed, as well as a young married woman and her two children, who were trying to cross the path of the fire. The woman had been advised and warned, it seems, not to venture before the line of the fire, but she failed to fully realise the danger until it was too late.

When there is a strong wind, the fire travels as fast as a horse can gallop. The best thing to do if one cannot get out of the way of the approaching fire is to "back-fire"; that is, to set a match to the grass around where you are standing. There would then soon be a clear space to stand on, where the fire could not reach you; for a fire does not travel twice over the same place as there can be no fire where there is nothing to burn. All

the settlers, as a rule, quit their regular work when they perceive a fire in the locality and proceed to plough up some "fire guards" around their buildings, in the shape of half-a-dozen furrows, more or less. These would stop the fire going any farther, for there is nothing to burn on the ploughed ground. It would take a very wide strip as fire-guard to stop the fire on a very windy day.

On perceiving the smoke of a prairie fire approaching in our direction, during the Autumn of my first year, I hastened to plough a fire-guard around my buildings, and was starting to plough some furrows around the farm when along came the fire before I had completed the first furrow, with the result that the farm got burnt over, and a dismal sight it appeared afterwards. The landscape all around was quite black, the atmosphere being strongly flavoured with the odour of burnt grass for quite a long period. I suffered no loss from the fire except the loss of the grass; but it does no good to the land to get burnt over, as the soil is afterwards more liable to get dried out, thereby shortening the breaking season the following year. Many people lost their hay and corn, but it was generally through their own carelessness or negligence in delaying the fire-guarding operation.

The Government employs men as fire-warders in the various districts. These have the power to call on any of the settlers to come and give help to extinguish the fire by fighting it with wet sacks. Those who refuse to come are subject to a penalty of £10, but everyone is quite willing to obey the call as a rule. It is to their own interest to do so. A newly-settled district is always liable to prairie fires during the first few years; but as the land gets settled up the danger becomes less every succeeding year, owing to the settlers ploughing wide strips of land around their farms, while the road allowances are also ploughed up and graded.

#### WINTER TIME.

The winter started that first year in the middle of November. The ground was frozen up on the 25th and kept frozen up during all the winter until about April 1st. That was quite a mild winter for Alberta. The cold was not exceptionally severe, and it was altogether more pleasant than I expected. At no time was there more than six inches of snow on the ground. All the snow that falls there in winter-time stays there until the Spring. It never thawed out in the winter in

'the part I was, consequently the soil could not be cultivated during that season for 4 or 5 months.

But in Southern Alberta the snow often thaws out in the winter. Frequently they have very strong, warm south-easterly winds, called "Chinook winds," that seem to lick up the snow as if by magic without apparently thawing it. This is the part where winter wheat is grown, immense crops of it sometimes. It will not be long before No. 1 Alberta Red Winter Wheat will be quoted for on the Liverpool Market.

Alberta has a very pleasant and salubrious climate, even in winter time, for at that time there is not much wind; it is unusually calm, with the sun shining brightly nine days out of ten. Snow falls on about two days in the month on an average. It freezes nearly all the time. The snow seldom clings to one's boots there as it does here; it is always dry and powdery; the slightest wind causes it to drift continually.

Whenever there is a strong wind (which is unusual in the winter-time) the snow is taken up from the ground and blown about in clouds. This is what is called a blizzard. It is extremely uncomfortable to be out of doors in such an one. In fact, it is dangerous to go out at all in a bad blizzard, as the air is filled with tiny particles of frozen snow that strike the face and pierce the eyes in a blinding and painful way. It is difficult to see any distance ahead; everything seems obscured, which is apt to cause anyone who might be caught in it to lose the way and thus imperil their lives. A young rancher, who lived close by my place, lost his life about 12 years ago through being caught in a blizzard. He was returning from town on horseback, and had reached within 200 yards of his home, when he missed the trail. The country was not fenced up at that time, which made it more difficult to find the way. The old trails were crooked and not very plain when covered with snow. It was an easier matter to miss the way than to keep it. A bad blizzard is much worse than a snowstorm; but we never have them so bad in Alberta as they do in Manitoba and in some parts of the United States. There they last sometimes for three or four days without "letting up." Covering up the buildings completely sometimes. I never saw one lasting more than a day in Alberta, and they only came once or twice during the year.

The atmosphere is usually so clear and crisp in winter as to be very exhilarating. Everything is so dry and clean under foot; and one is never liable to "stick in the mud," as is often the case on an

English farm. It is no trouble to keep the floors and yards clean. A clothes brush will last a lifetime there, for there is seldom any mud or dust to gather on the clothes; while one's boots, after being polished once, would remain polished for a long time.

Western Canada has such a dry climate that there is very little mud to be seen in summer time, and never a particle in winter owing to the hard and continuous frost. There is no need to salt the meat there in the winter, in order to preserve it. It may be hung up on a tree, or anywhere out of doors where the sun would not shine on it, and it would keep in a good condition for five or six months. As it would be frozen up in a solid mass it would require a hatchet to cut up a steak, for in that state it would be almost as hard as a piece of wood. If a roasting or boiling piece was wanted, a saw would have to be used. The cat usually licked up the saw-dust, so that there would be no waste. Most of the bachelors who are "batching" it, would buy a hind-quarter of beef in the beginning of the winter for about 3d. per lb. This would last sometimes until the spring.

#### WINTER ENJOYMENTS.

As most of the farm work was at a stand-still in the winter time, the settlers had plenty of time to spare for enjoyment, when everybody seemed to visit everybody else, or went to skating parties, entertainments, chicken suppers, oyster suppers, dances, concerts, and all those kind of things. The people were all very sociable, and were offended if we did not visit them often. Although most of the people were not of a very musical turn of mind, there was an organ, piano, or violin in almost every house, while gramophones were very plentiful.

Dancing is the winter pastime oftenest indulged in. The dances are always very properly conducted. Square dances or quadrilles seem to be the favourite dances. The American style of calling out the quadrilles is adopted. A person standing in the middle of the hall sings out the dances in rhyme and to the tune of the music, making it easy for a beginner to pick it up. Each square dance is different from the previous one, and has a rhyme to suit. In the country districts the music is generally supplied by a violin or two, where there is no piano. Should the violinist not happen to turn up, it makes no difference. A mouth organ is always obtainable, while performers are not scarce. Many an enjoy-

able evening has been spent to the tune of a mouth organ. The dances are sometimes held in private houses, but are oftener held in the nearest school house. For supper, the ladies bring with them a fruit or layer cake each, with delicious soft icing; some tea or coffee and bread and butter or pies are always provided, each taking it in their hands. The hat was usually passed round at the end, into which the bachelors were expected to drop a quarter (25 cents) or two.

The scarcity of ladies was a feature at most of these dances. The gentlemen often out-numbered them, three to one. I remember going to a dance, one very cold night about 2½ years ago, where only one lady turned up, owing to the severity of the weather, and she happened to be the daughter of the house where the dance was held. Over a dozen bachelors turned up. The fact of there being only one lady present did not deter them from enjoying themselves. What they called a "Stag" dance was held. White handkerchiefs were tied around the arms of half the fellows present, who had to take the place of, and conduct themselves as, ladies. A most jolly and joyful time was spent, despite the fact that, outside, the temperature, according to the thermometer, registered 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, that is 92 degrees of frost. It did not often get as cold as that. That happened to be the coldest snap we ever had.

#### HAULING FENCE POSTS AND FUEL.

I had a little more work to do the first winter than on the following ones, for there were the fence posts to be cut and hauled. Very slight willow posts were chiefly used, not much thicker than a man's wrist as a rule, which would last about twenty years in that climate. We had the liberty to cut any quantity free of charge, at a distance of four or five miles; also plenty of poles and firewood. I had to cross a lake about a mile wide to get there. As it was frozen over to a good depth, I was able to drive my wagon and team right over it, for the ice was covered with a couple of inches of snow, giving a good footing to the horses. Returning with a heavy load I could hear the ice crack sometimes with a loud report like a gun, not because of the weight of the load, for the ice was over 2ft. thick, and strong enough to hold a train, but because of the expansion of the ice while being frozen up. We generally went after wood in parties of about three or four teams, and mostly had a very good time of it, for the fellows out there were always in high spirits when they met.

Coal was also cheap and plentiful in the north portion of that district. We paid 6s. per ton at the pits' mouth for screened coal, while the slack culm could be obtained for nothing. This slack stuff would burn well if separated from the dust. By taking another direction the settlers could get all the coal they wanted for nothing if they cared to dig it themselves. It was generally found in the steep sides of a creek or ravine, in veins varying in width from 3ft. to 6ft., and worked by a tunnel on the level. Small trucks or trams brought it out to the pits' mouth. The province of Alberta is partly underlaid with coal of a good quality.

Oil is found as well in two different parts, while natural gas has been found in large quantities in several places. In a town called Medicine Hat, natural gas is used for lighting up the town, and providing power for several manufacturing concerns. They have one gas well which was set on fire somehow, and kept burning for several months before it could be extinguished, the flames shooting up to the sky to a height of nearly 200ft, with a noise and roar like thunder, lighting up the country for many miles around at night time. Natural gas has recently been tapped within the city limits of Calgary. It is found by boring a small 4in. hole in the ground, with a diamond drill, to a great depth, just like boring for oil. Sections of pipes are put down as soon as the hole is completed, to prevent the earth and particles of rock from caving in. A metal cap is screwed on top to prevent the gas from escaping. But when first struck the force of the gas blowing up is so strong as to make it very difficult to screw the cap on or to plug it. The force gets spent after a few days.

The presence of gas is a strong indication of oil underneath. The oil has not been tapped in that locality in any quantity yet. At Pincher Creek, about 200 miles south of Calgary, it is reported that a strong flow of petroleum oil has been struck. While several hundred miles to the north, in the Peace River country, there are enormous tracts of land with oil bearing formations. It is claimed by an eminent geologist that there is enough asphalt up in that district, almost in sight, to cover all the roads in the world. The appearance of asphalt in the ground is a true indication of the presence of petroleum.

Almost all the houses in Canada have stoves instead of open fire places, which burn either coal or wood. They are constructed in a portable form so that they can be moved and placed in any part of the house, the smoke being drawn through an easily fixed sectional pipe of 6ins. or 7ins. diameter, connected with a brick chimney. The stoves cost anywhere from £1 to £20, according to the size and quality, and also to the length of the purchaser's purse. They are much more economical than open grates, giving out more heat, and diffusing it to every part of the room. The homes in Canada are kept warmer than most of the homes in this country. The Canadian studies indoor comforts as much as anybody, and whether his home is built of boards, stones, logs, sods, or canvas, he will have it warm inside.

#### NEW TOWNS.

During October, in my first year out, the new railway that was being built in the neighbourhood reached a point within 12 miles of my farm. A full-fledged town, called "Stettler", sprang up at that point in an extremely short time. New towns are built nine or ten miles apart as soon as the steel is laid for the railway, the biggest town being generally at the end of the line. The railway was further extended during the last year of my stay to a point 40 miles east of Stettler. There is now a town within four miles of where I lived, called Gadsby, where, last July, there was nothing but a grass-covered prairie and emptiness. Now there are half-a-dozen stores or shops, a bank, several hotels and restaurants, three livery barns, schools, churches, several grain warehouses and elevators, and all the necessary buildings which compose a busy, up-to-date town. Wide streets have been laid out at right angles to each other. The building plots were sold by auction to the highest bidder, fetching from £10 to £50 each.

Schools are built in every locality as soon as 12 or more children of school age can be counted in a district of about four miles square. School mistresses are usually employed to teach at salaries varying from £80 per annum upwards, according to the size of the schools. The "School ma'ams" have sometimes very little to do in the country schools in the newly settled districts, for the attendance is often poor, only four or five children being present occasionally. The schools come very handy as places of worship. The Home Mission Society of Canada and others employ hundreds of

young men to go out to preach in the country districts of the west. Most of them are young Englishmen, and very fine upright fellows they are too. The Sabbath is strictly observed in Canada, just like it is in this country. In fact, the Canadian laws regarding the Sabbath are very stringent, no regular work being allowed on that day. The churches are not very strong there yet in the rural districts, simply because it is a young country and rather thinly populated. There is no state church in Canada, every religion being alike in the eyes of the law. Churches of the leading denominations are established in the towns and villages, and even in the newer and scattered settlements arrangements are usually made for holding union services of the different denominations. There are numerous Lodges of the different fraternal Orders—Freemasons, Oddfellows, Foresters, Modern Woodmen of America, Temperance, etc., etc.—throughout the country.

During my first winter, which was considered a mild one, the cold was severe at times, but not all the time. A cold snap would last for about a week, then for the next three weeks or so the weather was delightful, frosty of course, but the air was clear and crisp, with the sun shining most of the time. One could work out-of-doors nearly all the time if necessary, when suitably clothed, without discomfort.

#### SPRING TIME.

The following spring opened up the first week in April. In less than a week all the snow was gone. Then everybody was busy putting in the crops, and glad to have something to do after the comparative idleness of the winter months. The land is usually prepared in the autumn, so that the only thing necessary in the spring time is to sow the grain with the seeders, which are made very wide to suit the country. A four-horse seeder is from 10ft. to 12ft. wide, costing about £24. The kind that is coming into favour now is the single disc kind. These are lighter in draft than other kinds. The farmers like to sow as soon as the top couple of inches have thawed out, and before it thaws lower down. The grain has a better chance of germinating then, being fed with moisture as the soil gradually thaws out, for it seldom rains much for about a month after the spring opens up. Wheat is always sown first, then oats, barley and flax in the order named. It is important to get the seed into the ground as deeply as possible up to three inches, especially if the soil is dry.

The plough is put to work again as soon as the sowing is

over, to break up the prairie for next year's crop. I broke 60 acres that year, while my neighbours, the two London Drapers, managed to break 15 acres between them, and thought they were doing awfully well. While ploughing they always went together, one hanging on to the handles of the plough, while the other handled the lines. Their span of three horses being of rather a wild nature, it was often as good as a pantomime to watch their performance while hitching up and trying to make a start. Their greatest difficulty was to get them to pull together while starting. One horse would generally make a plunge forward in answer to their yells, and finding the plough too heavy for his own efforts, would immediately plunge backwards. Each of the other ones perhaps going through the same performance in turn. It was generally some time before all could be coaxed to pull evenly together. The ploughing was consequently of a very zig-zag appearance, many a piece being skipped here and there. They were quite elated over the fact that they were able to plough at all, without any previous experience. The only experience they ever had before coming to Canada was as footballers and counter-jumpers. They hardly knew which end of the horse to put in the shafts first, but they soon picked up the necessary qualifications for being successful Canadian settlers. By this time they know almost as much about the business as anyone that has been brought up on a farm.

The kind of ploughs used by most of the homesteaders for breaking was a light swing American plough with wooden handles, very wide steel share points, and one wheel only for gauging the depth. They cost from £3 10s. to £5. New steel shares would cost 14s. to 16s. each, while the blacksmiths charged 4s. for laying a point on a plough share, and 1s. 3d. for sharpening a share.

Having a little time to spare after the breaking season was over and before the haymaking commenced, we often used to go out on a shooting trip, in the buggy, in parties of three or four or more. There was plenty of game to be had of a sort, no pheasants or partridges, and very few rabbits; but any amount of wild duck, thousands of them, besides wild geese by the hundreds. Grouse or "prairie chickens" were also plentiful. As there was no need to take out a gun license, we had no need to spend half our time dodging the "coppers." The ducks were only there in summer time, for

the lakes and sloughs were all frozen up in winter, when they all migrated further south to a warmer climate, to return again in the following spring. The little sloughs were sometimes literally covered with ducks. I once remember shooting eleven at a single shot. They were so thick on the water; it was quite a common thing to have four or five at one shot. We ate so many ducks at that time that we were almost ashamed of ourselves. It was a case of fried duck for breakfast, roast duck for dinner, and cold duck for supper, and the same thing every day over and over again till we went at last that we could hardly look a decent duck in the face without blushing.

Then we went in for a change and shot prairie chickens. In form and plumage, they appear very much like a cross between a partridge and a pheasant, with feathers on their legs and feet, just like a Cochin China hen. At first they are very tame seemingly, hardly taking the trouble to get out of your way. As they had probably not been molested by the approach of man for ages until that year, they could not realise all at once, that a man carrying a gun was a more dangerous object than a horse or a cow. It was not at all difficult at that time to knock one down with a stick. With a gun or rifle, one could shoot the whole flock one by one without their taking flight. As the country gets settled up they are getting more wary by degrees. We ate so many of them those days that one of the London drapers thought that if we did not quit eating them before long, we would have feathers growing on our backs. He said he was getting to feel more like a prairie chicken every day. We had

Chickens young and chickens old,

Chickens hot and chickens cold;

Chickens tender, chickens tough.

Thank the Lord we'd had enough.

Every autumn large flocks of wild geese visited our stubbles. They were very wary and difficult to approach. Half of them were always on the look out, while the other half were feeding. I managed one day to creep within 80 or 90 yards of a flock by crawling on all-fours, and had the luck to drop one with my gun. I took it home, cut off its head on the block, and left it on the ground to bleed awhile. I then went indoors, took off my coat and turned up my sleeves, with the intention of feathering it. I had a brand new cookery book on the shelf, which I took down and

studied the best way to cook a goose, while my teeth seemed to water in anticipation of the feast in store. For the goose being a big one, I calculated on its lasting me four or five days at least, but to my astonishment, on going out to pick up the goose from where I had left it by the block, it was nowhere to be found. It seems my old dog had eaten it feathers and all. He used to be very thin, but now he was so fat and big around the central regions that one could easily tell where the goose had gone. I chased him for a while, and caught him at last as he was crawling under a gate. He had crawled under the gate scores of times before very easily, but this time my lord had miscalculated his dimensions. It was the one mistake of his life, as he found to his cost. His yells proclaimed that it did not quite suit his taste to be tickled with a furze-bush on its hind-quarters. Revenge was sweet, but it could not bring the return of the goose. So my visions of roast goose vanished like that.

#### HARVESTING.

The wheat harvest started in August that year, being earlier than usual owing to the early spring and rather dry summer. The wheat crop yields about 20 bushels to the acre. Flax was a very poor crop that season in some districts. Oats were a good crop in most places, yielding from 40 to 75 bushels to the acre. Hay was rather a poor crop on the prairie that season, because the land had been burned over the preceding autumn, thereby causing the soil to dry up considerably. Slough hay was always obtainable in abundance.

My second winter was a severe one. It started about the 1st of November. The snow covered the ground for seven months, to a depth of 12 to 15ins. on the level. The wheat farmers of the west have no objection to a heavy snowfall in winter, provided it thaws out before the end of April, as it is a kind of protection to the land, preventing it from drying up too much, and supplying it with the necessary moisture to start the crops growing in the spring. A heavy snowfall in winter is generally followed by a season of large crops. The only drawback being the liability of a late spring following. That year was a case in point, as it was the middle of May before the land could be cultivated that spring, making it very late in the season for sowing wheat, because, if sown too late, it might not ripen in the autumn before the

frost caught it. The 15th of May is considered the limit for sowing wheat. After that it is a risk to sow it, but oats and barley can be sown with success up till the middle of June. Wheat was the chief crop grown there, as the climate and soil were very suitable for it. It was generally more profitable than oats or barley. Some years it pays better to sow oats than wheat, especially when the spring is late. Oats would not be as liable to be damaged as wheat if caught by the frost in September. There are some districts where the soil is extraordinary rich, that are more suitable for oats than for wheat, spring wheat seldom ripening there at all, because the growth of straw is so rank.

In the district surrounding Lacombe, several crops of oats have been cut that yielded over 100 bushels to the acre, while the average for seven or eight years continuous cropping has been over 80 bushels on some farms. The soil there is a black loam of very great depth, too rich to ripen spring wheat. Fall wheat has been grown there with great success nine years out of ten, crops of 40 bushels and over being of quite frequent occurrence, without manuring of coarse. Bag or artificial manure is hardly ever used in Western Canada. The amount of farmyard manure made on most farms is only enough to cover a few acres. Many farmers object to sowing fall wheat because it has to be sown so early that only one crop in two years can be grown on the same land. If it is sown the same time of the year as it is in this country it would get winter-killed. About the middle of August is the best time for sowing it, just before harvest commences.

Severe hailstorms occasionally pass over certain districts, which cause considerable loss to the grain growers. To protect themselves again loss from hail, the settlers in Alberta have the privilege of insuring their crops with the Government for a small premium per acre. I only saw one severe hailstorm all the time I was in the country. It passed over a strip of land about one mile wide damaging the crops to the extent of half the usual yield. Some of the hailstone were an inch in diameter, as big as a pigeon's egg. Several windows were broken in the neighbourhood. Some districts are more liable to be "hailed out" than others.

Farming operations can be carried on much easier in Western Canada than in this country. There is less drudgery on a Canadian farm. The work is cleaner, for mud is usually

conspicuous by its absence. One man can handle three times as much cultivated land as he can here, although the ground is frozen for about five months in each year. The land is very easy to dress after being under cultivation a few years. Most of what the farmer makes on the land there is profit, for there is no rent to pay and no manure to buy. The virgin soil is so rich in plant food, and will remain so for a long time if properly taken care of, and farmed in an up-to-date manner. Harvest time was always our busiest time. Help had to be procured then to gather in the crops. It was no trouble to get men to work at a price. The wages in harvest-time were from 6s. to 8s. per day, and they are getting higher every year. Most of the farmers do not keep hired men all the year round, for there is nothing much for them to do in winter, except on the big cattle ranches. The winter is their busiest time, for the cattle have to be fed with hay as soon as the snow covers the ground. But there are many in the old settled districts who engage in mixed farming, who have to employ hired hands all the year round. Continuous wheat farming, although the most profitable on virgin soil, conduces to deplete the soil of its natural fertility. In order to maintain the fertility, and in some cases to restore it, mixed farming has to be resorted to. It is an old-established fact that the keeping of live stock on the land is the best method of maintaining its productiveness.

#### THRESHING THE GOLDEN GRAIN.

As soon as harvest is over the threshing gangs come round. The owners of the threshing outfit always bring with them enough men to do all the work except handle the grain. The farmer has to do that, and that only. The grain runs through a long spout from the machine right into the wagon-box. When that is full it is driven round to the granary or shed, and shovelled in through a hole with a grain scoop. The grain is not often handled in sacks, that would be too laborious. Every contrivance to save labour is taken advantage of. The grain is always so hard and dry, that it does not require turning. It can be left in a deep pile as long as desired without danger of heating. The most convenient way of handling the grain and the method adopted by many of the most progressive wheat farmers, is to erect portable granaries of about 600 bushels capacity, built of boards. They are usually built on skids or turners, in such a way that two

teams of horses can pull them over the ground when empty, and place them in any convenient position for threshing. With the aid of a few of these the farmer has nothing much to do threshing time except superintend operations, as the grain is deposited direct from the machine into the granary. The machines register automatically the number of bushels threshed, the figures on the chart indicating the amount. The farmers had to pay so much per bushel for threshing, generally 2d. for wheat, and 1½d. for oats and barley; 5d. was charged for flax.

#### YIELD PER ACRE.

The yield was considerably higher some years than others. Last year (1909) the wheat yield was 25 bushels per acre, which was considered a good crop in that district. Some farmers had from 30 to a 40 bushel crop. The previous years yielded an average crop of 18 to 20 bushels. Anything over 15 bushels is considered a paying crop.

The soil was good in the district I was in, but not so rich and deep as in some other parts. Still it was capable of producing a crop of wheat which would bring in sufficient to pay for the land it grew on. I wonder how many crops of corn would it take in this country to pay for the land it grows on?

Wheat farming in Western Canada is a more pleasant and profitable occupation than most people imagine. About the only real hard work attached to it is pitching the sheaves and stooking in harvest-time, and that only lasts for a short time. Most of the farm implements have seats attached to them enabling the driver to enjoy a smoke if he wishes while at work. Riding on a seat all day cannot be called hard or exhausting work.

The women on the farm have an easy time of it as a rule, having no rough work to do except house keeping. There is a big demand for young women as domestic servants, or "lady helps," as they are called. They always receive kind treatment, just like one of the family, and are not over-worked. Alas! The trouble is that they soon get married. It is estimated that there are over 80,000 more bachelors in Western Canada at the present time than single girls, owing to the fact that it is usually the young men that emigrate. Most of these young fellows have farms of their own, that will in time become very valuable. The only thing that keeps them

from being perfectly contended and happy is the want of a mate to enjoy a share of their prosperity.

#### "BATCHING" IT.

Many people imagine that the life out on the western prairies is so lonely as to be almost unbearable, but most of those who have tried it think otherwise. "Happiness is what we make it, more a condition of mind than the result of circumstances." There are thousands of bachelors living alone and doing their own housekeeping in Canada. Some of them from choice, others through force of circumstances. They are too much engrossed in their labour of planning and building a home, and contemplating their future prospects to give much thought to their lonely condition, especially if they are of an ambitious turn of mind. The first two or three years are often up-hill work. But there are such incomparable opportunities in the farming line that it is only a matter of time for everyone with a little "grit" to reach a position of absolute independence. A roaring campfire after the day's work is over cannot fail to bring a spirit of cheerfulness to anyone who is not a chronic pessimist. It would do good to thousands of those people in this country who suffer from many of "those ills that flesh is heir to" to take a trip to Western Canada, if it were only to try some of the "flab-jacks" or "sour-dough-biscuits," which most of the bachelors are such adepts at making. A few months residence amongst such a happy-go-lucky lot—inhaling the rarified air, so laden with the "ozone" which is always found in high altitudes—would so completely reform their systems as to make them feel like having a new lease on life. Taken as a whole there is not a stronger, healthier and more independent lot of men existent than the bachelors of Western Canada. They are optimistic almost to a man, which is part of the reason of their success. They are the ones who are chiefly concerned in "blazing" the path of civilization in that part of the world to-day, just like some of their compatriots were during the last century in the country lying further south. Canada is an empire in "the making," and it would indeed be a long time in the making were it not for those hustling bachelors, who have left good homes and loving friends, in order to build up homes of their own in the wilderness; so to speak, thereby helping to populate and build up a country which, no matter how rich in natural resources, would remain useless without the population to take advantage of those resources.

### ADVANTAGES OF WESTERN FARMING.

Rich, unoccupied land, in vast quantities, lies waiting the coming of the settler to claim it in nearly all parts of the country, the bulk of it at present rather remote from railways. Thousands of miles of new railways are being built, often preceding the settler in tapping some rich stretches of land available for settlement. Most of the land requires no clearing. But there are big areas in the northern parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan that are timbered more or less. There the richest soil is found.

The farming occupation is being carried on with much less labour than in this country owing to the difference in the quality of the soil and the climatic conditions. There are a great many necessary things done here which can be left undone in the West. Farm horses seldom need shoeing owing to the absence of stones and gravel on the roads. Their hoofs even have to be trimmed occasionally to prevent them growing too long and breaking off. Horses could be left out of doors winter and summer. If fed with hay on the sheltered side of the building in winter time, they would thrive well, if not worked too hard. On a few stormy nights I found it advisable to take them indoors. Several farmers leave their horses to shift for themselves with nothing except the straw piles to live on, with snow to eat instead of water to drink. On the horse ranches of South Alberta they are sometimes turned off in the fall, and never seen again until the spring. If the snow covers the ground a horse will paw for the grass, and subsist on it all the winter, showing up in spring with a shaggy coat and in surprising fine condition. This should be sufficient proof of the winter climate being a healthy one. No one should be deterred from emigrating there, owing to the severity of the winter season.

One and the same kind of harness is used for ploughing as for driving. It seldom requires oiling or greasing owing to the climate keeping it in a pliable condition. The horses hardly ever require grooming. Mine were never groomed except when covered with mud after wallowing on ploughed ground in wet weather, or when covered with dried perspiration. They were never sick all the time I owned them, while they accomplished more work than the majority of the horses in that neighbourhood that were more highly fed and pampered.

The hay stacks require no thatching, which means no thatch to be drawn, no wooden spikes to cut and sharpen, and no thatch strings to buy; for hardly any rain falls in the autumn and none in winter to spoil the hay. Haymakers and swath-turners are not required, for the strong rays of the sun and the continuous fine weather soon cures the hay, no matter how thick it may be. The land requires no manure, for the virgin soil is very rich in plant food yet, and will remain so for a long time under favourable cultivation. Generally speaking, there are no stones to pick and haul in every season, no hedges to trim, no ditches to dig, no turnips to hoe, no cows to milk as a rule on the corn farms, or pigs to feed, or calves to serve. Labour is reduced to a minimum. New labour-saving methods of cultivation and management are continually studied. The farm implements do not require housing, as they last almost as long outside as they do inside, if kept in the shade from the rays of the sun. The mower and binder knives only required sharpening about once in a season, as the machines are never set to cut very close to the ground. In the winter time there is hardly any work to do on the corn farms. At the end of the season there is no rent to pay. Everything conduces to make the farming occupation a pleasant one. Taxes are very low. The school tax or rate is about £1 10s. to £2 on a 160 acre farm, while the road-tax usually amounts to about £1 12s., which can be paid in work if preferred. A couple of days' work on the road, grading or ploughing, will pay the tax.

#### SOME DISADVANTAGES.

The advantages of living in Western Canada are many. There are disadvantages as well, but none so serious as cannot be easily overcome. The severity of the winters is considered by many to be the greatest drawback. A few years residence there would be sufficient to convince anyone who was not prejudiced or home-sick, that there is less discomfort to be endured in winter time in the crisp, dry air of Western Canada, than in the moist-laden atmosphere of the Mother-country. During the cold season suitable warm clothing is necessary. Wool-lined mitts for the hands, felt boots, fur caps, and fur overcoats are generally worn while out in the open air. Very few of those who have tried it declare that the winter season is altogether objectionable, the many advantages to be enjoyed in that season being in most cases considered a sufficient asset to outweigh the few incon-

veniences which have to be endured once in a while, such as getting up on a cold morning to light the fire when the thermometer registers 40 degrees below zero. All who have been born and bred there prefer that climate to any other in the world. The summer weather is nearly perfect. It is almost impossible to describe the delightfulness of this pleasant season with its long days and almost continuous sunshine, and its cool nights. A wet day is always anxiously looked forward to, for the rainfall is slight, it averages about 15 inches in Central Alberta. Most of the rain falls in June and the latter part of May as a rule, just when it is most needed.

#### MOSQUITOES.

One objectionable feature of the early summer season is the presence of mosquitoes, a species or stinging knat or fly, very common all over the North American Continent. Their presence in large numbers is not propitious to much comfort or pleasure to any living object within the range of their vision. Human blood seems to have a special attraction for them, while they have no objection to a feast on the cows, sheep or horses, but the very sight of a pig seems to fill them with disgust! (I wonder if it is because they also are descendants of the spawn of Ishmael.) Their sting seems to leave a peculiar kind of itch, which, if scratched, would itch all the more. A small swelling would result that would last and itch for about a day. Men often have to cover their faces with veils made of mosquito netting while at work in the fields, and wear leather gloves over their hands. Horses do not mind them very much except when they are numerous. Cattle have a very decide objection to them in any shape or form, and are very difficult to handle if there are many about. Many of the new settlers use oxen for working at the start, instead of horses, owing to their comparative cheapness. They are capital for ploughing purposes and for breaking up the prairie, slow but sure. A sight often seen on a calm, sultry summer's afternoon when the mosquitoes are bad is a span of oxen, with tongues lolling, running away at top speed with a gang plough at their heels, breaking up their harness and everything in their path in their mad rush to the shelter of the stable, while the owner (probably one of the green Englishmen) may be seen following in their wake, hat in hand, wondering why on earth were mosquitoes ever created.

In order to afford a little comfort to the stock, a

"smudge" is made in the evenings. This consists of a pile of damp hay or dry horse manure, which is set on fire and slowly consumed, making a lot of smoke. The cattle and horses would crowd around the smudge and linger in the smoke for hours at a time, for the mosquitoes have a most pointed aversion to smoke of any kind, it seems to disagree with their stomachs. A small wooden railing is built around the smudge to prevent the horses from pawing it. The worst time for mosquitoes is during the early summer months on calm days. They cannot stand the wind at all. The slightest breeze causes them to be blown away. After appearing about six weeks they gradually dwindle away, until at last, about August, they disappear, and one soon forgets all about them. They breed in ponds of stagnant water. As soon as the little sloughs on the prairie get dried up in midsummer the mosquitoes die out.

#### AUTUMN OR THE "FALL" OF THE YEAR.

The autumn season is more delightful than can be imagined. The sun shines gloriously every day. The farmers never worry about having suitable weather for sowing or harvesting their crops as they can always rely on having plenty of fine weather at all times for haying, harvesting, and threshing. In most seasons there is also plenty of time for ploughing the stubble land, and preparing it for the following season's crop before the winter frosts set in.

One of the most remarkable sights that is often witnessed on the western Prairies in the autumn, and which is not often mentioned, is the charming mirage. The land around the horizon would sometimes appear to be elevated in the sky, with the trees and houses inverted. At other times the image of a beautiful lake would present itself in the distance surrounded by houses here and there that seemed to be elongated into the shape of towers. The shape, form and position of everything constantly changing until they gradually disappeared. On some frosty mornings in October they appeared most vivid, sometimes in truly enchanting illusion. A vision of a mirage is such an every day occurrence at that time of the year that people cease to wonder at it. It has not been proved yet what causes this optical illusion. Scientists have many theories concerning its origin, but these are chiefly conjecture. The clearness of the atmosphere has something to do with it, for a mirage is never seen except in countries that are celebrated for the clearness of the air.

### A VISIT HOME.

After spending five summers in the country I decided to take a trip home to the old country. Boarding the train at Stettler in a snowstorm on November 20th I arrived at Toronto four days later, travelling over the same route as I come out over. The climate in Toronto was noticeably milder than it was in the west. This is a fine city of about 300,000 population, one of the most progressive on the Continent. After spending a couple of weeks there I booked my passage on the Lusitania to Fishguard, via New York. Between Toronto and New York the journey was very interesting, especially the first part of it down to the fruit farms of Southern Ontario, where you can see by looking out of the carriage windows, miles and miles of fruit trees of almost every description adaptable to the South Temperate zone, all planted in straight rows. Peaches and grapes grow to perfection in the open air. Hundreds of acres are devoted to these two kinds of fruits, which are proving to be most profitable. A nett income of over £500 is often obtained on a ten acre fruit farm in the Niagra district. The grape vines are trained to grow on straight wire fences, placed about six feet apart. The soil in the orchards is not allowed to go to grass as is generally done in this country, but it kept well cultivated with the plough and harrow. It has been proved that the yield of fruit is very much larger and of a better and more uniform sample wherever proper cultivation of the soil is resorted to. All fruit trees are sprayed at least twice each year with Paris green or some other suitable insecticide for the prevention of the various diseases which these fruit trees are subject to, and also to destroy the insects which are injurious to the fruit crop. With proper treatment a good even sample of fruit can always be depended upon. Large spraying machines are constructed especially for the purpose, drawn by a horse. They are capable of spraying about ten acres per day each. Excellent land, clear and open, and suitable for fruit growing can be purchased in small tracts of five acres and upwards at from £10 to £20 per acre freehold, within easy distance of a railway station. Good fruit farms with trees in full bearing would cost from £80 to £200 per acre. Fruit farming is one of the most pleasant occupations in the farming line. A large number of poultry is generally kept on many fruit farms. They help to pay the bills, provide dainty food, destroys the grubs, and fertilize the soil.

### NIAGARA FALLS.

A break in the journey was made at Niagara Falls in order to visit the great falls which, as everybody knows, are one of the greatest natural wonders of the world. There the waters of the great river St. Lawrence take a sheer drop of 165ft. over a perpendicular precipice. Probably there is no sight which impresses itself more strongly upon the majority of beholders than the view from the brink of the falls. Such mighty on-rushing torrents, so powerful, yet so smoothly and alluringly moving on over the precipice, and so near is the visitor to what seems an abyss of destruction that the scene impresses itself indelibly on his mind. The river above the falls is cut in two by Goat Island. The American Fall is about 300 yards wide at the brink, while it is estimated that the volume of water passing over the horse-shoe or Canadian Fall is ten times greater. The stupendous nature of the falls is all the more impressive when the visitor stands at the water's edge in the gorge below, and looks upwards at the floods descending in such graceful lines. The width across the falls is nearly half a mile, yet the water below the falls, while passing through the gorge, narrows down to about 100 yards. This is known as the whirlpool rapids. There the current rushes onwards at a speed of 40 miles an hour, the foam-crested waves of which are entrancingly beautiful, some of the waves rising to a height of 50ft., while the river at this point is over 150ft. deep. The horse-shoe as a single object is regarded as one of the sublimest things in nature. The Canadian rapids have a fall of 55ft. in a mile before reaching the falls. The immense boundaries and grandeur of these rapids as seen from the Canadian side enables one to form a conception of the vast volume of water flowing tumultuously onward towards the towering cataract. The views of the descending floods, the swirling water below, and the rainbow through the mist of continuous spray all lend enchantment to a scene which will never fade from the memory.

It is estimated that the momentum, or kinetic energy of the volume of water passing over Niagara Falls is capable of developing 7,000,000 horse-power. Twenty years ago the Niagara Falls Company was formed for the purpose of harnessing the falls by constructing a power station. Several other companies have been chartered since then with

the same object in view, i.e., that of generating electricity for power purposes. To-day the amount of machinery installed develops approximately 200,000 horse-power, which is less than 4 per cent of the total power available. The beauty and grandeur of the Falls are yet unimpaired by the diversion of the flow of water necessary for developing such power.

On resuming the journey the Niagra river was crossed by one of the immense steel bridges that span the river just below the falls. Canada was left behind while the train sped on its course through the level lands of New York State, on its way to New York City. Passing through the cities of Rochester, Albany, and others, we reached our destination within 12 hours after leaving Toronto. Although it was quite dark when New York was reached one could not help being impressed with the immensity on which this great city has been built, as the train glided along the banks of the beautiful Hudson River, through miles and miles of streets, all lighted up with electricity. Only a day was spent in the city before embarking on the s.s. Lusitania, bound for home. The stupendous height of some of the skyscrapers was enough to make one shudder while passing by and glancing up. The highest building is the Metropolitan Life Co.'s building, which is fifty stories high. Several other buildings are from 30 to 40 stories high. They are generally built of concrete reinforced with immense steel frames, and are practically fire-proof.

#### BOARDING THE LUSITANIA.

The steamer was boarded at an early hour the following morning. The anchor was weighted at 10 a.m. Very few New Yorkers came out to wish us good-bye, quite a contrast to the scene witnessed on the Liverpool landing stage whence we embarked a few years previous. As the steamer glided away from the wharf and headed for the open sea the views obtained from the decks were charming and interesting. The statue of Liberty—perched on a small rock in mid-stream looked very imposing as we passed it. This was built after the close of the American war of Independence, to commemorate the independence of the United States of America from the yoke of Great Britain. Most Americans of the present day seem to forget that their country was at one time a British Colony, and owes its former success chiefly to British enterprise and pluck.

We lost sight of the land of the Stars and Stripes in a short time after leaving the harbour's mouth, for the Lusitania travels at the rate of about 30 miles an hour, leaving a foam behind her that can be seen for miles. The terrific power of her engines causes a good deal of vibration all over the ship, which is not very pleasant. She is exquisitely fitted up in every respect. The treatment given to the passengers of all classes is good, and the food cannot be excelled. A first-class orchestra provides selections of music twice daily, while several of the passengers contributed songs or speeches that helped to pass the time with enjoyment. A daily paper was printed on board which enabled us to keep in touch with the news of the world while in mid-ocean. The news is gathered by wireless telegraphy from both sides of the ocean.

The shores of the Emerald Isle were sighted on the fifth day out. A short stop was made at Queenstown before proceeding to Fishguard—the coming new port on the north-west coast of Pembrokeshire. The rugged and picturesque cliffs of Wales were soon sighted. It seemed to fill our hearts with gladness to look once more on our dear old native land; not because we were dissatisfied or unhappy while out on the other side of the "herring pond," but because one's native country always has a certain attraction which is rather indefinable.

#### LANDING AT FISHGUARD.

The majority of the passengers were landed at Fishguard, while the steamer took the rest to Fishguard. After a short run in the train from Goodwick the old home was reached. Almost everything in the old district seemed to be in the same condition as it was five years ago. Time had left its traces on some of my old acquaintances. Some of the old faces were missing. Several had a few more grey hairs than they used to. The children of five years ago were in many instances the young men and women of to-day. Otherwise there was very little difference. Out in the west, where the cities, towns and villages grow so quickly, and where the aspect of the country alters so much that a five years' absence might cause one to lose his bearings altogether.

#### CONCLUSION.

In conclusion I think it would do good to many young men and women in this country to go out to Western Canada

or British Columbia, if only to remain a few years. The experience is worth the trip, and the trip is worth the experience. The climate is the healthiest and most salubrious in the world. It is no use going out there expecting to find everything the same as it is in this country, for the conditions of life are entirely different out there. As every one knows, it is the British flag that floats over Canada. They have British laws which are rigidly enforced. Life and property are just as safe there as here. The people are neighbourly and honest. Much as I love my native country, I must say that it cannot compare with Canada in its climate, opportunities, and sociability of its inhabitants.

Anyone dissatisfied with his present condition would do well to emigrate; but I would not advise anyone who has a good home and doing well to leave this country, unless he goes determined to stay there long enough to gain a knowledge of the opportunities and an insight to the possibilities afforded by a young and growing country like Western Canada.

It is a country for young people, and any young person who is of an ambitious turn of mind would make no mistake to take the advice of the late Mr. Horace Greely when he said, "Pack up your bag, young man! Go West, and grow up with the country."

